

**NORTHWEST INDIANA SPECIAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE**  
**2150 W. 97<sup>th</sup> PLACE**  
**CROWN POINT, IN. 46307**  
**September 9, 2026**

Executive Session: The Board of Managers met in executive session at 5:30 p.m. and discussed items related to IC 5-14-1.5-6.1.

1. Mrs. Smith-Gomez called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Mr. Bradley Keehn took roll call. The following members were recorded as present: Mrs. Erica Smith-Gomez for Highland, Mr. Bradley Keehn for Hobart, Mrs. Tara Beilke for Hanover, Mrs. Louise Neese for Lake Ridge, Mr. Kevin Music for Lake Station and Dr. Nathan Kleefisch for Tri-Creek. There was no representation for River Forest.
3. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for comments or questions on agenda items from the audience. There were none.
4. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for any additions or deletions to the August 19, 2026 minutes. Mrs. Beilke moved for Board approval of the August 19, 2026 minutes, as presented. Mr. Keehn seconded the motion and passed unanimously.
5. Ms. Gilmore recommended Board approval of the monthly financial reports dated August 31, 2026. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the monthly financial report dated August 31, 2026. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese and passed unanimously.
6. Ms. Gilmore requested Board approval of Resolution #26-13: To Transfer Amounts from the Education Fund to the Operations Fund. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of Resolution #26-13, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Beilke and passed unanimously.
7. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of Resolution #26-14 Re: I.C. 20-28-9-1.5 (a). Dr. Harkema shared the resolution outlines the need for additional compensation for a School Psychologist who has taken on the additional role of obtaining a NPI # through Medicaid and will be signing the prescription referrals for Speech, OT and PT. Mr. Keehn moved for Board approval of Resolution #26-14, as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Kleefisch and passed unanimously.
8. Ms. Gilmore requested Board approval of the secured school safety grant award. Ms. Gilmore shared with the school safety grant we will be using the funds to add a set up doors between the current receptionist area and the bathrooms up front where visitors to the school will need to be buzzed in and staff will need to use an access card to gain entry. She said the entire project will cost \$22,490.40 and through the grant we were awarded \$15,473.40 so NISEC will be paying \$7,017 to complete the project. Dr. Kleefisch and the rest of the Board thanked NISEC Administrative for their hard work to obtain these grant funds and making the school more secure. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the secured school safety grant award, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese and passed unanimously.

9. Dr. Harkema shared the Move-In numbers for each of the 7-member Districts for information only. Dr. Harkema said as of September 4, 2026 there have been 173 move-ins. The Board members asked if Dr. Harkema had move-in numbers from this time last year for comparison. Dr. Harkema said she didn't have the numbers in front of her but she could get the numbers and share them with the Board.
10. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the revised date for Fall Craft Show Fundraiser. Dr. Harkema said at the August 19<sup>th</sup> Board of Manager meeting, the Board approved the Fall Craft Show to be held on Wednesday, September 23, 2026. Due to the start of the school year being delayed because of severe weather in the region, many of the student's projects will not be completed in time for the originally approved date. Dr. Harkema requested the date of the Fall Craft Show to be rescheduled to September 30, 2026 or October 1, 2026. The official date will be decided as it gets closer to the event. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the revised date for the Fall Craft Show fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.
11. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the Winter Craft Show Fundraiser for the BLAST Program at Eagle Park Community School. The craft show will be held in November during the week of November 16<sup>th</sup>. Proceeds from the craft show will be used for future classroom activities and future work-task projects in BLAST. Mr. Keehn moved for Board approval of the fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.
12. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the "BLAST Bistro" Fundraiser will occur monthly through the entire school year. The proceeds will be used for classroom activities such as craft projects, gardening supplies and cooking activities. Mrs. Beilke moved for Board approval of the fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.
13. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the "BLAST Snack Cart" Fundraiser will be open every Friday during the entire school year. The proceeds will be used to keep the program running and to help fund classroom activities. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Neese and passed unanimously.
14. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the BLAST Coffee Cart (Cup of Joy) fundraiser which will run during the entire school year. Cup of Joy students will make a variety of coffee and specialty drinks for staff. They will take delivery orders twice a week and will have a service line one day a week. Proceeds from the BLAST Coffee Cart fundraiser will help student participate in a variety of leisure activities in the community such as bowling, golf, etc. and help keep the program running. Mr. Keehn moved for Board approval of the fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Beilke and passed unanimously.
15. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the "Walk-A-Thon" Fundraiser will be held on October 22, 2026 with a rain date of October 23, 2026. The Walk-A-Thon is also the 4<sup>rd</sup> annual memorial for Lauren Cap, an Eagle Park Teacher who unexpectedly passed away. The proceeds will be used for Eagle Park holiday activities, student activities and Field Day. Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board

approval of the fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Music and passed unanimously.

16. Dr. Harkema requested Board approval of the FUN Pasta fundraiser which will run from September 14, 2026 through October 2, 2026. Eagle Park School will collect both paper order forms and online orders for this fundraiser. Proceeds from the fundraiser will be used for Eagle Park holiday activities, student activities and Field Day. Mrs. Beilke moved for Board approval of the fundraiser for Eagle Park Community School, as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Kleefisch and passed unanimously.

17. **Director's Report:**

Storm/Waiver Day Update

Dr. Harkema provided an update on the waiver day process for Eagle Park School. Dr. Harkema shared she submitted Eagle Park's waiver day plan. The plan included changing the scheduled E-Learning Day to an in person instructional day, updating 7 early dismissal days to regular days and adding 3 instructional days to the end of the calendar. Dr. Harkema's plan is to have the plan approved before the next Board of Managers meeting so we can have a revised school calendar for approval in October.

Staffing Updates

Dr. Harkema provided an update regarding current staff openings. Dr. Harkema shared at this time, NISEC has 1 teacher opening and 7 para openings. She said NISEC has a planned recruitment event to target River Forest and Lake Station specifically as they need paraprofessional staff. She said she is also trying to plan a recruiting event for Tri-Creek as well for the teacher opening and paraprofessionals.

Negotiations Pre-Meeting

Dr. Harkema updated the Board of Managers on the Negotiation Public Hearing/Pre-Meeting that was held on September 2, 2026.

Donation for Eagle Park Sensory Room

Dr. Harkema shared with the Board that Eagle Park School received a donation from Lakeshore Misfits and Mux in the amount of \$1,250.00 to update the sensory room.

Other Items from Dr. Harkema

Dr. Harkema shared she applied for a grant through the Crown Point Community Foundation for a structured curriculum program for the Autism classrooms at Eagle Park. Dr. Harkema also shared the Seclusion and Restraint Committee at Eagle Park is meeting monthly and they are currently researching different programming to use for Crisis Prevention. Dr. Harkema discussed her ideas on a 45-day interim program that would be called (CHOICES), she said this program, if implemented, would keep kids from going on homebound. She mentioned this program is currently in the beginning phases and she has a lot to work out with the details but if it were to move forward she will bring it to the board for approval.

Dr. Harkema discussed the Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) Lab she is wanting to bring to NISEC and utilize a room within the building. The lab would be fully

funded through grant funds. Students would be getting hands on job skills as this is a job coach lab; the goal is for students to leave with employability skills. She mentioned the lab would be open to the 7-member Districts for the Life Skills High School classrooms and other programs that would benefit to come and use through a room check out process. Dr. Harkema would like to use the lab as a revenue source as well and open it up to other Districts that aren't part of the Cooperative and charge a fee for them to use the lab. Dr. Harkema said one of her goals this year is to focus on transition and making improvements and she sees this PAES lab as a huge step.

**18. Personnel:**

Dr. Harkema recommended approval to the following personnel actions:

**A. Retirement**

None at this time.

**B. Resignations**

Certified

*Lillian Hampton*, Mild Interventions Teacher at Hobart Middle School, effective September 8, 2026. Moved to a Paraprofessional Position.

*Kristin Wiesjahn*, Mild Interventions Teacher at Hanover Middle School, effective August 10, 2026.

Classified

*Alandria Brown*, Paraprofessional at Johnston Elementary, effective September 8, 2026.

*Amanda Copley Clausen*, Intense Interventions Tech at Eagle Park Community School, effective August 23, 2026. Resigned to Accept District Secretary Position.

*Shayna Franz*, Virtual Speech E-Helper/Paraprofessional at River Forest High School, effective August 24, 2026.

*Jamie Jamnick*, Paraprofessional at Red Cedars Elementary, effective August 20, 2026. Never worked.

*Lauren Marrell*, Paraprofessional at Evans Elementary School, effective August 26, 2026. *Jennifer Nelson*, Paraprofessional at Eagle Park Community School, effective August 18, 2026.

*Raquel Peterson*, Paraprofessional at Liberty Elementary School, effective August 25, 2026.

*Wendy Spencer*, Paraprofessional at River Forest High School, effective September 1, 2026.

*Tanya Spinks*, Paraprofessional at Evans Elementary School, effective July 23, 2026.

**C. Terminations**

*Sheldon Dollinar*, Paraprofessional at Oak Hill Elementary, effective September 1, 2026.

**D. Appointments**

Certified

*Julie Denormandie*, Educational Diagnostician in Highland, effective September 8, 2026.

*Marzena Dziadkowiec*, Mild Interventions Teacher at Lowell Intermediate School, effective September 8, 2026.

Classified

*Maria Brigham*, Paraprofessional at Eagle Park Community School, effective September 8, 2026.

*Lela Cobbins*, Paraprofessional at Evans Elementary School, effective August 31,

2026. *Lonita Garrage*, Paraprofessional at Hanover Middle School, effective September 1, 2026.

*Lillian Hampton*, Paraprofessional at River Forest High School, effective September 9, 2026.

*Kilee Hite*, Paraprofessional at Hobart High School, effective August 25, 2026.

*Rebecca Klacik*, Behavior Support Specialist/Long Term Teacher Substitute at Southridge Elementary School, effective August 25, 2026.

*Madison Solorio*, Paraprofessional at Bailey Elementary School, effective August 31, 2026.

Non-Certified Clerical

*Amanda Copley Clauson*, District Secretary with NISEC, effective August 24, 2026.

**E. Independent Contract**

None at this time.

**F. Leave of Absence**

*Laura Autterson*, FMLA Leave pursuant to the memo from Christine Hazard, dated September 9, 2026.

*Sherry Kennedy*, Medical Leave pursuant to the memo from Christine Hazard, dated September 9, 2026.

*Tashara Travis*, FMLA Leave pursuant to the memo from Christine Hazard, dated September 9, 2026.

*Julie Whitney*, revised FMLA Leave pursuant to the memo from Christine Hazard, dated September 3, 2026.

**G. Conference Leave**

None at this time.

**H. Other**

*Candi Dines-Cress*, Long Term Teacher of Record Substitute in River Forest, effective August 12, 2026.

*Esther Lopez*, Rescinded prior resignation as Virtual Speech E-Helper with NISEC, effective July 6, 2026.

*Catherine Petrak*, End of Contract for Position as Behavior Support Specialist at River Forest Middle School, effective July 30, 2026.

Dr. Kleefisch moved for Board approval of the Personnel Report, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Keehn and passed unanimously.

19. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for comments or questions from the Board.  
The Board Members thanked everyone for their hard work and said they can see there are a lot of great things going on. They also thanked the Union members for coming to the meeting and being a part of the audience.
20. Mrs. Smith-Gomez asked for comments or questions from the Audience.  
Mrs. Hickey asked if the pasta fundraiser link will be posted for all staff to order or if it is just for Eagle Park.
21. Mr. Keehn moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Kleefisch and passed unanimously.